

## **Academic integrity outreach:**

### **Supporting high school students for success in higher education**

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#### **Abstract**

This brief article highlights how the Library at the University of Calgary works with high schools to teach their students about academic integrity with a focus on building ethical research and writing skills in advance of students' transition to a post-secondary learning environment.

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Universities across Canada offer various outreach initiatives to K-12 students interested in learning more about what it's like to be a student on campus. At the University of Calgary the Library collaborates with high schools across the city to teach sessions on the research process and scholarly inquiry. These sessions are primarily designed for students in Grade 11 and 12 who have a research project they are currently invested in. Teachers and their classes visit our campus and the sessions are taught in classrooms at the Library. Having high school students on campus is an ideal time to introduce key student behaviours and mindsets to future students which in turn, we think, can lead to a smoother transition from high school into a post-secondary learning environment.

Since the 1990's researchers have been examining high school student's experiences with academic dishonesty. As McCabe et al. (2012) have concluded in their own work and the foundational work by others surveying junior and senior high school students (ex. B. Brandes, 1986 and F. Schab, 1991), "cheating habits develop long before college" (33). High school students can bring their attitudes on the issues surrounding academic dishonesty into their work in postsecondary environments (33). If mindset and beliefs about academic integrity are cemented before they join us as a first year student then we, in the U of C Library, asked ourselves what role might we play in reaching out early to high school students and their teachers to get a head start on thinking about the importance of academic integrity?

Over the last 5 years we have had active engagement in discussions about academic integrity on our campus. We have been fortunate with the relationship we have with high schools in our community and over the last few years we have been able to see a role, in working with our high school partners, to teach students more about academic integrity.

When we offered teachers to more fulsomely address this topic in our sessions they were thrilled. While many teachers try to cover the key issues around academic integrity in their own class they often say they only have time to talk about it in relation to cheating and plagiarism. The teachers we work with value our expertise in the area. Teachers report that when students hear from an on-campus expert about the overall importance of academic integrity the students learn that academic integrity as a priority.

In light of what we know and what teachers wanted it made perfect sense for us to incorporate more discussions around academic integrity into our high school sessions. So how do we, in the library, incorporate academic integrity into our sessions with our high school partners? Below are a few of the key things we talk about in order to make the discussion engaging and relevant.

### **We define the topic.**

First discussion we have as a class is essentially defining what integrity is and what it means in an academic context. The initial response from students when I ask “What comes to mind when I say academic integrity?” is quite often the same words: cheating, stealing and plagiarizing. We discuss how knowledge is created and we talk about scholarship as a conversation that has new people jumping in all the time to contribute something new. We help high school students move from only thinking about academic integrity as a plagiarism issue, to thinking about it as an overall approach to their work.

### **We use relevant examples.**

When we are talking about integrity, citation and giving others credit we will often use examples from social media to provide relevance for students. We might use an example of grabbing a friend’s picture from Instagram and sharing it on another platform without permission or without giving credit. When we do this we ask students specifically about how they would feel if their friends did this to them, to morally engage them in the issue. We will regularly highlight stories in popular culture to increase participation in the discussion. We would watch a short clip from something like the Melania Trump – Michelle Obama speeches to provide a visual around plagiarism.

### **We run through scenarios.**

Modelling the work we do teaching academic integrity in workshops through our Student Success Centre we will run through scenarios with the high school students as a group and debate whether, in each scenario, the students are being dishonest or committing an academic integrity violation. When we take this approach we are thinking about what students might see in high school. As an example we might discuss self-plagiarizing by working through a scenario where a student reuses material from an English project in one of his/her Social Studies assignments.

### **We share stories.**

We have found the high school students can connect quite well when we share stories from our own undergraduate degrees. Many of our instructors share first hand experiences where they thought they were making the right decisions around issues involving academic integrity but were actually unaware of the pitfalls and what the outcomes might be. Taking a personal approach really opens the door to students asking questions about your experiences and then you being able to share how you learned strategies to avoid possible problems down the road.

### **We talk and talk and talk again.**

We teach the same high school students multiple times a year and in both Grade 11 and Grade 12. This gives us ample opportunity to keep talking about academic integrity. Our hope is with an ongoing discussion surrounding this issue students will be able to be better prepared for their first year on campus. With better preparation comes a broader awareness of when and where to get help. Because the issues around academic integrity can be tricky, especially with technology and particularly with sites like YouTube playing a huge role in students' learning journey, we want transitioning students to know when and where to check if something doesn't seem right.

While we have been offering these sessions for some time we find each year there is something new to explain and more diverse challenges to explore with students. Getting a head start in understanding the issues surrounding academic integrity and having time to practice ethical research and writing behaviours is critical in helping high school students make the jump to their first year on campus. Our future plans include looking more closely at our work with high schools to better understand the impact our sessions have in their preparation for postsecondary learning.

### **References**

McCabe, D. L., Butterfield, K. D., & Treviño, L. K. (2012). *Cheating in college: Why students do it and what educators can do about it*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.